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REPORT.

To the Executive Committee of the

American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen, — On the 29th of February, 1832, a commission was appointed by our House of Representatives, 'to prepare, digest, and report to the next Legislature, such modifications, or changes in the pauper system of the Commonwealth, as they may deem expedient; to appoint an agent to visit the principal establishments in the Commonwealth and elsewhere, for the public charge and support of the poor; to collect the statistics of these institutions, and to report the facts so obtained to the Commissioners.' I was one of the Commissioners for these objects; and, at the request of the gentlemen associated with me, undertook the agency here referred to. By causes, however, which at the time I thought sufficient, the business of this agency was delayed till late in the last year. I was thus prevented from visiting many towns in the Commonwealth, which it had been my intention to visit for the above-named purposes, and had no leisure left to me for going beyond the bounds of our own State. Nor was this all. A Report was to be made to the Legislature at as early a day as possible

in its last session ; and a meeting of the commissioners, for an examination of the facts I had collected, could not be obtained till very near the time when their Report must be presented. On me, therefore, devolved as well the work of writing the Report, as of preparing the statements and tables which are appended to it. I refer to these circumstances, because I wish to avail myself of this opportunity of adverting again to some of the topics of that Report. The measures proposed in it are referred to the next meeting of the Legislature ; and the Report, with a bill for carrying these measures into operation, has been sent to every town in the Commonwealth, that the whole subject may be fairly brought before the whole people. It is a subject which has strong claims to very serious attention, for it involves great interests, both pecuniary and moral. Assured, however, as I am, of the correctness of the principles assumed in that Report, and aware of the very defective manner in which they are there developed, I am glad of an opportunity to recur to them; and happy indeed shall I be, if I may thus do anything to lead to better provisions than have yet been made among us for the charge and support of the poor, and for the remedy and prevention of pauperism and crime.

The leading principles to which I would call your attention are, that provisions for the poor are the proper objects, not of legal enactment, but of christian humanity and charity ; — that this humanity and charity, if left unfettered by legal enactments, are sufficient for the security of the best provisions which can be made for all the classes of the indigent and necessitous ; — and, that the result of interpositions of human laws to secure obedience to the moral law of charity, ever has been,

and is, an increased, and even frightfully increasing extent of the beggary and crime, which these laws have been intended to remedy. The first question which here naturally arises, is, what are the facts in the case? To facts, then, let us appeal.

The influence which poor-laws have exerted upon pauperism in England, is, I well know, a question upon which her statesmen and philanthropists have held, and still hold, very different opinions. Nor is it to be doubted that other causes than poor-laws have alone produced an equal, or a greater pauperism elsewhere. The pauperism of Ireland, for example, where there are no poor-laws, is even far more extensive and dreadful than that of England. But, on this subject, no fair comparison can be instituted between England and Ireland. With the exception of Poland, Ireland has been, and is, the most cruelly oppressed country in Christendom; and, in her oppressions, which I need not enumerate, we have causes sufficient to account for any conceivable want, and degradation, and wretchedness, to which the population there, or any where, could be reduced. Not so is it with pauperism in England. There it has grown with the very progress of liberty; and, even under circumstances of the greatest prosperity in all the departments of human enterprise. There, too, it has called forth an unexampled voluntary assessment for its relief; and yet it has grown under the combined pressure of these measures for keeping it down. How, then, is this fact to be accounted for? Let me refer you, for a moment, to the history of English Poor-Laws, and I think you will be satisfied that they are, in part at least, accountable for the extent and miseries of English pauperism.

The earliest legislative act respecting the poor in England, of which I have seen any notice, is that of the twenty-third of Edward III., in 1349. By this act, 'persons were declared guilty of an offence in relieving beggars able to work.' A very different measure followed in the twelfth of Richard II., 1388. It was then 'directed that *the ordinary, or clergy of the district*, should receive collections, and distribute them to the impotent poor.' This is the first legal requisition for the support of the poor of which I have any knowledge; and 'the practice' under it, it is said, 'was, that if any person did not contribute charitable alms for the poor, he was summoned before the ordinary, who reproved him. If he was contumacious, he was summoned before the Ecclesiastical Court, and might be excommunicated; and then served with a Bishop's, or Chancery writ, which confiscated the whole of his effects, and imprisoned him for life.' How far this law secured an abundance of *alms* for the poor, I know not. That it could not have excited charity in the heart, or have led to the contribution of 'charitable alms,' will, I think, be most manifest to every one. That it did not lessen the number, or improve the character of the poor, is intimated by the enactment 'in 1495, the eleventh of Henry VII.,' by which 'vagabonds were to be put into the stocks for three days and nights, and to be fed upon bread and water; and any person who should relieve them with food was to forfeit twelve pence, (three shillings).' These vagabonds were the able-bodied beggars of the time; and the punishment here inflicted upon beggary implies that the evil had become a greatly increased one, and that it was thought to have demanded a very strong remedy. 'Eight years afterwards, these laws were confirmed.' But 'in 1535,' a new principle was

adopted. In that year, three hundred and seventysix of the smaller monasteries were suppressed by Henry VIII.; and others were confiscated by him in subsequent years. Many who had received relief, or support in these institutions, were thus compelled to seek for aid, or for subsistence elsewhere. It was therefore 'enacted that all governors of shires, cities, hundreds, hamlets, and parishes, should make provision for the poor by receiving charitable alms, so that no poor person should go a begging. Thus the relieving of the poor was taken from the ecclesiastical, and given to the civil power. Nor was this the only extraordinary provision in this case. 'Persons making "open dole," or giving money in alms otherwise than to the poor boxes in each parish, were to forfeit ten times the value.' Thus, all almsgiving, except through the parish poor boxes, was not only forbidden; but every act of free charity was declared by the law to be criminal, or at least punishable, in proportion to its approximation to the liberality of Christian benevolence. I know not what was the extent of poverty at that time in England. But, allowing for great exaggeration in the statement, it must have been fearfully extensive and aggravated, since we are told, that, 'during the reign of Henry VIII., a period of thirtyseven years, and when the population was scarcely more than a third of its present number, seventytwo thousand persons were executed for theft and robbery, and, that the prisoners for debt and crime amounted at one time to sixty thousand persons. Sturdy beggars, for the first offence, were whipt. On a second conviction, they lost an ear. And on the third, they were executed as felons. In the succeeding reign, the Protector Somerset, though remarkable for his popularity, seemed determined, by direct force and terror, to extirpate

vagabonds. The first act of his administration declared, that if any person shall apprehend a runagate, who had lived disorderly for three days, and shall take him before two justices, the vagrant was to be branded with the letter V, and was to be adjudged a slave to the person who had apprehended him for two years. This person might also beat, chain, and put the vagrant to labor never so vile, and might feed him upon bread and water, and refuse him meat. If the vagrant should absent himself fourteen days, he was to be branded on the cheek with the letter S, (slave) and was to be a slave forever. If he ran away a second time, he was to be executed. For the honor of human nature, this law continued in operation but two years.' But it not only proves the desperate state of the country, but intimates much, I think, to excite suspicion of the moral tendencies of poor laws. At least, it goes far to show, that poor laws had contributed nothing to the suppression of pauperism. 'In 1563, the 5th of Elizabeth, an act was passed to appoint collectors of voluntary contributions, who should also distribute them weekly, so that none should sit a begging. If any parishioner obstinately refused to pay reasonably for the relief of the poor, the justices were empowered to tax him a reasonable weekly sum; upon his refusal to pay which, he was to be imprisoned. And if any parish had more impotent poor than it was able to maintain, the justices were empowered to license them to beg in the hundreds of their country. At length, after other enactments for the regulation of assessments for the poor, and for the appointment of overseers, the last great act of Elizabeth's life was the pauper law of the 43d of her reign,' which has since been the basis of the poor laws of England. This law

is immensely in advance of all that had preceded it upon the subject. It was as wise, perhaps, as a law could have been, the object of which was, a legal provision for the poor. Many are the revisions under which it has passed during the last two hundred years, and by none of them has it been improved. The population of England, at the time of the passage of this law, is estimated to have been between four and a half, and five millions. The first assessment, in 1601, for carrying it into effect, — that is, for the relief of the impotent poor, and for setting the poor to work, — was £200,000. In the year 1700, when the population was about five and a half millions, the poor rates had increased to £1,000,000. And now they are advanced to nearly £8,000,000, or $35,000,000 ; with a beggary as importunate as want and desperation can make it, even amidst the most extraordinary prosperity ; and with an amount and extent of crime, which make even this beggary a concern of secondary consideration. Now I do not ascribe all this crime and poverty to poor-laws, and poor-rates. Far otherwise. But I may ask, whether there is any ground whatever in the space of history over which we have passed, for the belief that poor-laws and poor-rates have diminished pauperism in England ? I may ask, if these successive enactments, and provisions, do not indicate very unfavorably for the character and tendencies of poor-laws ? And I may also ask, if it be not an unquestionable fact, that, of late years at least, these laws have increased the number and sufferings of the poor, by acting as a bounty at once upon population among the poor, and upon the oppressions of their employers ? Is it said that these are results, not of the law itself, but of the mode of its administration ?

I answer, that the law never was, and it never can be, well administered. It carries in itself, and they are inseparable from it, the principles of all the evils which have come from its mal-administration. The language of the facts I have adduced seems to me to be very unequivocal. The provisions of the fortythird of Elizabeth, and the laws of the founders of our commonwealth, I have no doubt, were intended for good. But they were direct violations of a principle, which is not to be entrenched upon by human legislatures; the principle, I mean, that direct and authoritative prescriptions and enforcements of moral duty belong only to God. Religion has never flourished, except in the cases in which it has been left as free by man, as it has been left by God. And charity to man, as a vital element of religion, must be left as free as love to God, or it will never flourish. The regulating power of these principles is within themselves; or, they are regulated by causes which are beyond the reach of human authority. Attempt by law the enforcement of either, and results will follow, — they have never failed to follow, — which will rebuke the daring presumption. Happy will it be if they shall prevent its recurrence.

The contrast, in this view of them, is very striking between England and Scotland. In the latter country, we are told, 'poor rates were comparatively unknown even when mendicity was ten times more prevalent than at present;' and they continue to be comparatively unknown there to this day. It was indeed most happy for Scotland, that in the time of the extremest wants and degradation of her poor, resort was not had to legislative interference for them. 'In 1745, the state of the country was rude beyond conception; and *the common people, clothed in the coarsest garb, and starving*

on the meanest fare, lived in despicable huts with their cattle. In the Highlands, in 1760, the condition of the inhabitants was, if possible, worse than that of the Lowlands. There was scarcely any variety of wretchedness with which they were not obliged to struggle, or rather, to which they were not obliged to submit. *To such an extremity were they frequently reduced, that they had to bleed their cattle that they might subsist for a time upon the blood,* (boiled); and the inhabitants of the glens and valleys repaired in crowds to the shore, a distance of three or four miles, to pick up the scanty provisions which the shell-fish afforded them. Their houses were commonly wretched, dirty hovels, built with stones and mud, and thatched with fern and turf; without chimneys; filled with smoke; black with soot; having low doors, and small holes for windows, with wooden shutters; or, in place of these, often stopped with turf, straw, or fragments of old clothes.' 'The poor, half starved animals, through mere weakness, often could not rise of themselves.' 'At this period, too, *mendicity was extremely prevalent;* and the labors of the peasantry, during harvest, were every now and then interrupted by the necessity of carrying crippled beggars from one farm to another.' 'Now,' on the other hand, 'the laborers are universally well fed, and well clothed. Their cottages are comfortable, and they are all in the enjoyment of luxuries that were formerly never tasted even by rich proprietors. At the same time, also, that mendicity is almost entirely unknown, poor rates have been introduced only in a few instances, and are in all cases exceedingly moderate. At present, indeed, we believe there is not a parish in the whole province of Galloway, assessed for the sup-

port of the poor.' — This is the language of the last October number of the Edinburgh Review. It is asked, from whence came this amelioration of the condition of the peasantry in Scotland? It is attributed, by the reviewer, to 'improvements in agriculture and the arts.' 'We have the best attainable authority for saying,' he adds, 'that we are considerably within the mark when we affirm that the produce of the country has increased *six-fold* since 1770; and, as the population has not quite doubled in the interval, it follows, that, at an average, each individual is now enjoying *three times* more of useful and desirable articles, than were enjoyed by his ancestors, subsequently to the seven years' war.' The arts, however, have advanced as rapidly in England, as in Scotland. Nay, it is said by the Reviewer to be 'admitted on all hands, that the produce of wheat in England and Wales has more than trebled since 1760; and, that, of the whole population of that part of the empire, there is certainly not one eighth part that does not use wheaten bread.' The question arises, why, then, is mendicity so tremendously great in England, and so comparatively small in Scotland? Is it said, that the evil is to be ascribed to 'the injudicious alteration of the poor laws in 1795,' by which the poor rates were employed to eke out the wages of the laborer. But whence came this perversion of the poor laws? From a succession of bad harvests? The seasons, indeed, in England, from 1795 to 1801, were very unfavorable to agriculture, and the wants and sufferings of the poor there were proportionally increased. But have there been no seasons in Scotland greatly unfavorable to its agriculture? What, then, has been the resort in Scotland in exigencies like

these? I answer, voluntary assessments in proportion as they were demanded by the exigency; and, when that ceased, the assessments ceased. But in a time of similar pressure in England, new modifications of the poor laws were adopted; for the question, there, of the provision to be made for a season of extraordinary distress, was not one of occasional, and temporary, and free, and sympathising charity. It was, rather, one of the adaptations of a law to the case; of a law which for centuries had been in operation, requiring annual, or more frequent assessments; and to which the poor in England had been as much accustomed to look for supplies, as those in Scotland had been to their own industry. In this single view, then, of poor-laws, their tendencies and consequences seem to me to be most manifest. When I compare the two countries in this respect, I cannot doubt whether it have been a great good to Scotland, that its charity has not been fettered by these laws; or, that they have been a cause, and a principal cause, of what some of its greatest statesmen have designated as the 'frightful pauperism' of England.

I cannot say that there are not other facts, and other views of this subject, which would lead to a different conclusion respecting it. I can only say, that I have looked at the facts which have come under my own observation, or within the narrow scope of my reading upon it, with a very strong impression of the magnitude of the interests which are involved in it; and that, before I undertook the agency for an examination of the actual influences of our own poor-laws, I was decidedly in favor of a modified plan for a State provision for the poor. But in the progress of that examination, I was brought to an entirely different conviction; and this con-

viction has been strengthened by all my subsequent reflections upon the tendencies and bearings of the poor-laws of England. Still, I well know, I may be in error. My aim, however, is not change for the sake of change, or even for the purpose of experiment. It is truth, and truth only. There are few interests of earth and time in which I feel so deep a concern, as in the causes, the remedy, and the prevention of the prevailing pauperism of the world; and there are few subjects, if indeed there be one, for increasing light upon which I should feel so much gratitude and happiness, as upon this. If I have taken narrow views, and have been led to erroneous conclusions upon it, no one will rejoice more than I shall in an exposure of my errors, and the prevention of any evil consequences which might have resulted from them.

There is, however, another view of poor-laws, which deserves far more attention than has been given to it. I have referred to this view, in speaking of them as direct and authoritative encroachments upon the peculiar prerogative of God, — *the direct inculcation of moral duties upon men.* Here, indeed, I may be met by the advocate of these laws with the reply, that although they have been so called, they are not, in truth, 'a compulsion of charity,' or a legal requisition of charity; that, in strictness of speech, however they may have been designated, they do not touch the moral law of charity, and have nothing to do with it. They are, on the contrary, to be viewed only as provisions at once for that *protection* which the law owes to the poor, in their exposures to neglect, and oppression and misery; and, to those who are not poor, for defence against the dangers to which society would otherwise be exposed from an

overwhelming pauperism. My answer is, that in requiring assessments for the poor, the law has expressly and repeatedly required them, as '*charitable alms.*' It has therefore certainly intended to enforce charity. I have no doubt that the protection of society has also been one of the objects of poor laws. But, does any one believe that the protection of the poor was ever thought of in framing these laws? This is entirely a modern, and a very recent explanation of their design. Nor is this all. I take the ground, that provisions for the supply of the necessities of the poor are the proper objects, not of legal enactments, but of the moral law of charity. Such provisions ought to be *charities*, in the strictest sense of the term. Our religion is not more full, or more distinct, on any subject than on this; and the argument against poor laws, in this single view of them, is, to my mind, entirely satisfactory. *They set aside the charity of religion, and substitute for it something which is not charity.* Nor is this the only encroachment which law has made upon moral rights, and moral duties. In establishing a religion for the State, it has, in every instance of this daring, substituted for christianity something very different from the simplicity and freedom of the gospel. Law has never interfered even for the regulation of wages, or of industry or enterprise in any of their departments, without extending injury to a far greater number than it has been able to benefit. Above all will this be the result, when it assumes to enforce moral obligations. And provisions for the poor are, I repeat, the appropriate work of charity. So God intended that they should be. And never will they be sufficient, or what they should be, or conduce to God's purposes concerning them, till they are made exclusively the work of an enlightened christian charity.

This topic is so important, that I beg to say a few more words upon it.

It certainly would be a wise principle in legislation, never to attempt the attainment of moral objects by law, till it shall have been proved that moral means are insufficient for their attainment; and, even then, that such objects should be made the aim of law, not by assuming the power of enforcing moral obligation, but by removing, as far as they are within the fair scope of law, the impediments which are in the way of a free moral action in society ; the outward and visible facilities and excitements to evil. In this way, Legislatures, for example, may do much for the cause of temperance. They may impose heavy excise duties, and require heavy costs for licenses to sell ardent spirits. They may also not only imprison the drunkard, making no distinction between the rich and the poor ; but may give his property, if he have any, to trustees or to guardians, for his own support and that of his family. But, even while thousands are dying the victims of lawless appetites, it is not the province of law *to command temperance*, or, to prescribe to men what, or when, or how much they shall eat or drink. The law, too, may and should extend protection to all, whenever they may require it, in the quiet exercise and enjoyment of their religious rights. But it may not require that men should read the Bible, or pray at home, or go to church on Sunday, or on any other day. It may also, and it should, inflict exemplary punishment upon the profligate, the gambler, and the dishonest ; for these are violators of the rights, disturbers of the peace, and to the extent of their influence, destroyers of the order and security of society. But if it should take into its keeping and

direction God's laws respecting moral purity, and industry, and honesty, it could communicate no salutary impulse to these laws; and, it would certainly lead to their very great perversion. And, in regard to charity, the law may be a very efficient instrument; for, it may do much for the remedy and the prevention of pauperism. It may act with a great and rightful power for these objects, by the means to which I have already adverted. And, in addition to these, it may give authority to Overseers of the poor to retain in their charge and service any able-bodied recipient of their aid, or support, till, by his labors he has remunerated them, or the institution in which he has been aided, for the expense incurred for him. A law to this effect would be justified by the principle, that if a man refuse to pay a just debt, he violates one of the elementary principles of civil society; of the laws of property; and may therefore be constrained to pay it. It may also establish Houses of Reformation for juvenile offenders, and thus save society from their depredations, and many hundreds of them from poverty and crime. It may make its prisons, through the solitary confinement of their inmates, and its wise and humane provisions for moral discipline, for useful instruction, and for generous excitement, to be schools of reformation. And it may extend all that protection equally to all the rights and interests of the poorest, which may be fairly claimed and enjoyed by the most opulent; and thus enlist the sympathies of the poor in the cause of law, and justice, and order, and the common weal. But it cannot authoritatively require charity, or prescribe the manner or amount of almsgiving, without encroaching on a moral principle, to the action, or even to the very life of which, freedom is as es-

sential a requisite as is air to the continuance of human existence. It cannot prescribe the manner and amount of almsgiving, without substituting a principle for charity, which will be even far more liable to the greatest abuses, than is charity, amidst all the selfishness of the world, to be insufficient for the occasions which require its exercise. This is a fact, which, I think, is very clearly demonstrated by the history of all legal interpositions for the support of the poor. These interpositions have commenced in seasons which, it was thought, peculiarly demanded them ; that is, in seasons which called for extraordinary efforts for the relief of the poor. But, in such seasons, what has been the resort in Scotland ? There, these exigencies have been left to the free judgment of those who were to meet, and to provide for them ; and measures have been adopted, which were confined in their operation to the time for which they were required. But in England, fettered as it has been by legal requisitions in regard to the poor, the resort, in similar exigencies, has been to the law in the case ; and, if no fair use could be made of it, recourse was had to an abuse of the law. This is the natural operation of the systems of the two countries for the relief of the poor. An extraordinary demand for this relief calls forth, in one, an extraordinary exercise of actual charity ; and, not only of individual, but of social charity. When these exigencies occur there, the landed proprietors meet for the purpose of affording the relief required ; and they afford it by a voluntary assessment. Or, the Parish Sessions may give the relief which the necessities of the case demand. This relief, however, is continued no longer than the exigency which called for it. On the other hand, the abuses of the poor-laws in

England, of which so much is said, and which are traced to the scarcity which began in 1795, have continued to this day, are sanctioned by usage, and, till the occurrence of a few late acts of resistance to them, threatened to become as essentially a part of the system, as if the law had incorporated them with it. This is a fact full of solemn admonition, and should not be lightly regarded by us.*

* In Mundell's 'Comparative View of the Industrial Situation of Great Britain from the year 1795 to the present time,' the author, in speaking of the act of the 43d of Elizabeth, says, 'The Legislature here made a great mistake, in attempting to enforce a moral obligation, which rests upon a far higher sanction. *This obligation has never been found to fail in the parishes of Scotland, where no compulsory provision has been introduced.* Mr. Duncan, a clergyman of the Church of Scotland, says, "the poor," in his parish, "are principally supported by their own relations. There is that feeling, in Scotland, of independence, that laudable desire among the poor to provide for themselves, and that dislike of anything approaching to charity, that the laboring classes in those quarters in which poor-rates have not been introduced, universally consider it their duty to make every sacrifice to support their poor relations." Whenever this moral obligation has been interfered with in Scotland, it has been found to be prejudicial. A committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in a report made to a select committee of the House of Commons upon the poor-laws, in 1817, say, "It is clear to the committee, that, in almost all the parishes that have come under their notice, where a regular assessment has been established, the wants of the poor, and the extent of the assessments, have regularly and progressively increased from the commencement. And it does appear to be a matter for very serious interest to the community at large, to prevent, as far as possible, this practice from being adopted; to limit the assessments as much as they can be limited, where the circumstances of particular parishes render them unavoidable; and, wherever it is practicable, to abandon them." ' pp. 101, 102.

'A fund is raised in every parish in Scotland by voluntary col-

Our Commonwealth, almost from the very date of its foundation, has been under the influence of poor laws. Our fathers came here with all their prepossessions strong in favor of laws for the support of the poor. They had lived under the operation of such laws in the parent country. One of the very first enactments, therefore, of the Court of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, had for its object, 'to determine all difference about the *lawful settling, and providing for, poor persons;*' and the extraordinary power was given to 'any Shire Court, or any two magistrates out of Court, to dispose of all unsettled persons into such towns as they shall judge to be most fit for the maintenance, and employment of such persons, and families, *for the ease of this county.*' Here, then, is the origin of all that litigation, which, from the beginning, has disturbed the peace of our towns, upon the question of the settlement of the poor; — a litigation, the least evil of which has been, and is, the not unfrequent expendi-

lections at the kirk door, and devoted to charitable uses. This fund is administered by the "Kirk Session," a body composed of the ministers and elders of the parish. When a year of extraordinary pressure occurs, and the fund proves insufficient for its purposes, the heritors, or landholders of the parish, hold a meeting, at which they fix for themselves a rate of contribution to make up the deficiency.' — *Edinburgh Review, No.* 55.

'No country in Europe has followed the example of England in the institution of poor laws.' 'On the continent of Europe, the public institutions afford protection only against infirmity, and extreme penury. Even Holland, so noted for its hospitals and charities, has not a poor-rate on the comprehensive plan of England.'

See Mr Meredith's report to the House of Representatives in Pennsylvania, on the operation of the poor laws. 1825. And Lowe's Present state of England. p. 189.

ture of twice the amount of money, which would be required to support him, or her, who is the object of the contention. Let the Overseers of the poor in the towns of our Commonwealth be consulted upon this subject, and great numbers of them, as well from their own experience, as their observation, will acknowledge this evil to be a great one. It is a contention, — respecting what ? The legal duty of a town in regard to the relief, or support of a fellow being, to whom it has been found necessary to give relief, or support. A poor individual, or a poor family has asked for, and has received assistance, from an Overseer of the poor. And it is not improbable that relief may have so been asked, from the very circumstance that the Overseers are legally required to give it. It is believed, however, that he, or they, have a habitancy in another town in the Commonwealth. Notice is therefore sent to this town, that the individual, or family so aided must be removed ; and that, till this removal is effected, all expenses incurred for the sufferer, or sufferers, will be charged to the town to which he, or they, are so supposed to belong. Is the asserted habitancy denied ? The resort is ' to the law ; ' and the question is argued as a mere legal and pecuniary one. So, indeed, it must of necessity be. If the support required by the poor individual, or family, was regarded only as a concern of humanity and charity, no argument could be held upon it in our Courts. Presented in this form, it would be dismissed at once as a purely moral question, to be settled by moral considerations and principles. And as a merely legal and pecuniary question, the decision of which must rest upon the facts which go to prove, or to disprove,

the asserted and denied habitancy, the purely moral considerations and principles of the case are set aside in the minds of the litigants, equally as in those of the lawyers whom they employ as the supporters of their cause. It is a contest in law between towns, — not to settle a principle, the settlement of which will prevent future differences in regard to the poor, but, simply for a recovery on the one hand, and for an exemption from payment on the other, of an expense which has been incurred by a town for the relief, or support of some person, or family, which it is denied has a legal habitancy in it. Can such contests be maintained without a great sacrifice of true charity ? Is not the cost, and the loss, of moral and kindly feeling, which are incurred in these contests, incomparably a more serious consideration, do they not bring with them an incomparably greater evil to our towns, than would be the pecuniary cost of supporting those who are the objects of such contentions ?

Again. The very law which requires the support of the poor, of course invests the poor with A LEGAL RIGHT to this support. It thus creates a new, and supplemental right, additional to the natural and moral rights which were antecedent to it. And why is this ? Is the natural right of man denied, or indeed the right of any living being, to that which is indispensable to his subsistence ? ' Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry.' (Prov. 6. 20.) Or is the moral right, the right which is founded in the exposures and sufferings of our common nature, and in our relation as fellow beings, and I will add, even in conscience, the highest principle of our nature, — is this right too undefineable, or too feeble, for the security of a provision for the poor ? However this may be,

the fact is unquestionable, that the right thus conferred by law is fully understood. There is here no obscurity. This right, too, is as strong as it is well defined. I do not mean that every Overseer of the poor must, and does, give to every applicant for public alms. But I mean, that the applicants for public alms are greatly increased in numbers, by the knowledge of this right to alms when they think that they have need of them. I am quite accustomed to hear the expressions, 'there is a provision made for the poor, and I have a right to it as well as others.' The right, in common cases of our home poor, may not often be openly asserted, when alms are sought of the Overseers of the poor. And yet I doubt not that they will bear me witness, that the assertion of it, even in these cases, is not an unheard of occurrence among them. It would be strange, indeed, if the knowledge of such a provision required by law, should fail to create applicants for it. The provision is virtually a fund created by the law, of which those who understand the law, and who had rather live upon the earnings of others, than by their own industry, will seek their share; not however as a charity, but as a legally allotted portion of the common stock. Nor is it to be doubted that a share of this stock is sought, and obtained by many, who, if there had been no poor laws among us, would never have asked for charity.

These, however, are not the greatest of the evils of our legal system of provision for the poor. The order of 'the Court of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay,' to which I have referred, 'for determining differences about the lawful settling and providing for poor persons,' has its date in 1639. But the principle having been adopted, that legal interference

was necessary to secure the exercise of the common rights of humanity toward the suffering poor, and a most arbitrary law having been passed for fixing settlements, it is not strange that the occurrence of an unforseen exigency, bearing directly upon the operation of the principle thus assumed, and of the measures taken to carry it through, should have been interpreted as a call to new legislative provisions upon the subject. Such an exigency occurred in 1675. "This court," it was then said, '*considering the inconvenience and damage which may arise to particular towns, by such as being forced from their habitations by the present calamity of the war, do repair unto them for succor*, do order and declare, that such persons, being inhabitants of this jurisdiction, who are so forced from their habitations, and repair to other plantations for their relief, shall not, by virtue of their residence in such plantations they repair unto, be accounted, or respected inhabitants thereof, or *imposed upon them according to law.* But *in such case, and where necessity requires, by reason of inability of relations, &c., they shall be paid out of the public treasury.*" The question arises, supposing there had been no poor laws previous to 1675, whether even the difficulties of this exigency would have been thought a call for legal interference? Had our ancestors never before enacted laws for the support of the poor, and, especially, if they had not brought with them the spirit of legal provision for this object from England, I do not believe that 'the difficulty and damage,' which it was apprehended, 'might arise to particular towns, by such as, being forced from their habitations by the calamity of the war, repaired unto such towns for succor,' would have been felt by these towns to have de-

manded legislative aid from the Public Treasury. The call was loud indeed, and imperative upon these towns, for extraordinary exertions. And had there been no poor-laws, free social charity might have received a strong excitement in behalf of the sufferers referred to, not only in the places where they were, but in other towns than those in which the destitute sought for temporary security and support. Nor can I have a doubt that the sympathy and humanity of those who were able to defend, and provide for their brethren thus 'forced from their habitations,' would have been sufficient for the exigency, great as it might have been. But, the fact is, and it is not to be forgotten, that social charity had hardly known a day of freedom within the limits of 'the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay.' It had been bound in fetters at its very birth, and was now so crippled that it was thought at least that it could not go alone. Or, it had not been trusted, and it was therefore thought that it could not be trusted. The Legislature had taken it into its charge, and the people therefore thought that it was the proper charge of the Legislature. Here were the chief difficulties of the case. Government had undertaken to say who should, and who should not, be supported by towns. The consequence was, that towns had not only learned to measure their obligations to charity by the ordinances of government, but to look also to government for relief, either when they felt, or feared, the weight of a more than ordinary burden. It was in this exigency that recourse was had, for the first time in our annals, to the Public Treasury for the support of the poor. I am almost tempted to say, would that our fathers could but for a moment have foreseen the effects of this pre-

cedent ! The waste of money, indeed, I account as nothing, though it has been very great, compared with the pauperism, and the waste of virtue and happiness, to which it has ministered.

Suppose, then, that our poor laws should be abolished. This is a measure which is thought by some to be fraught even with far greater dangers, than are any with which these laws may threaten us. ' Repeal these laws,' it will be said, ' and thousands of beggars, now aided or supported by our Overseers, will at once be thrown upon the community. Repeal our poor laws, and, unharmed as may be many of our small towns, the large ones, and especially upon the sea-board, will be exposed to an inundation of poverty, from which we should soon find it necessary to pray that Legislative interposition may again be granted for our protection.' I reply, that I have no fear of this result. I have no fear that a repeal of our poor laws would leave the poor in any town in the Commonwealth exclusively to a dependence on private charity, provided that other means than private charity should be required for the charge of them. There might be, and I think there would be towns, in which, within a short time, it would be found no longer necessary to have annual assessments for the poor ; because there would be found in them, as there are in many towns in Scotland, no greater number requiring charity, than could easily, and willingly, be taken in charge by private benevolence. But exigencies would probably occur even in these towns, which would require extraordinary efforts and measures effectually to meet them. And in our large towns, extraordinary efforts and measures might immediately be demanded. But for what ? To aid and sup-

port all who have hitherto been supported ? No. It is the facility with which this provision has been obtained, by many of the idle and able bodied, who will never work, while they can live without work, and by the intemperate and improvident, who might support themselves in the time when there is no demand for their labor, were they to spare and save as they well might while they are every day finding employment, which has occasioned a great extent of the expenditures that have been incurred for the poor. It is a matter of course, that, as long as individuals of this description have only to demand public support to obtain it, the necessity of labor in one case, and of providence and economy in the other, will be unfelt. I would even say, let the law make the amount of its allowance as small as it may, and prescribe the manner in which this allowance shall be given with as many restrictions as it may, the simple fact of an appropriation for this object by law confers a legal right, and justifies a legal claim to it. And how shall the right, or the claim, be limited in practice, where the ground of either cannot be contested by those to whom application for the provision is made? Let the difficulties of the case, then, be as great as they may, which would be consequent upon a repeal of our poor laws, the proposition of a return to these laws would at best offer but a choice of very great difficulties. It would at best be the proposition of a measure which would be as sure to produce an ultimate increase of the evil, as it would be to bring a temporary relief from it. The questions, then, are to be fairly and fearlessly met, are there no better provisions to be made for the poor, than any which are within the scope of law ? Are not the claims of justice and of humanity to be fully answered, while at the same time the measures are

avoided by which pauperism in its worst forms, and sin and misery are extended? In other words, should all legal provision for the poor be abolished, how are the poor to be provided for? I hardly know whence a greater amount of moral good could be looked for to our community, or our State, or, at least, whence a rescue could be obtained from a greater amount of moral evil, than from an interest, as strong, and as prevalent as should be felt, in this inquiry.

Do you ask, then, what answer I would give to this last inquiry? In reply, I must ask, from whence has come upon us this extent of poverty? Who are these multitudes of the poor? Are the causes of the condition in which we find them unintelligible? Or, where these causes may be understood, are they wholly beyond our control? Is this whole multitude in some way to be supported by alms? May we not cleanse, or dry up, some of the springs of this evil which threaten us as with an inundation? Let us pause at these questions. Look at this amount of the poor *en masse*, which is thus to be thrown upon the community, and the difficulty of provision for them without legislative requisitions, aye, and without legislative allowances for their support, may seem to be insuperable. But separate, and classify them, and light will break in upon the questions of duty, and of interest in regard to them. Who, then, I ask again, are these poor? What are their just claims? And what are the rights and duties of society respecting them?

In answer to the question, who are these poor? I would divide them into five classes. First: The idle, intemperate, and improvident, who, but for their idleness, intemperance, and improvidence, might support

themselves by their own labors. Second: The permanently poor, who are broken in constitution and health by the viciousness of their lives, and are capable of little or no service by which they may minister to their own subsistence. Third: The permanently virtuous poor, who, by reason of disease, debility, or old age, are to be permanently supported. Fourth: The temporarily and occasionally poor, who are doing what they can for self-support; but who need, especially in winter, and during a time of sickness, occasional and temporary aid. And, fifth: The orphan, or deserted, or neglected and morally exposed, or actually vicious children of these classes of the poor. Each of these classes, I think, has strong claims, which imply duties on the part of society towards them. But society has also corresponding claims and rights respecting them. Let us then be just in our judgments of their claims and rights, as well as of our own. Nay, we cannot correctly estimate our own claims and rights, or conceive justly of our duties in the case, while we deny, or think lightly of, the just claims which they have upon us. If society have caused, — and who can doubt whether it have caused? — a great amount of this poverty and vice, it is so far responsible for it, and should provide for it. But it should so provide for it, as at the same time to prevent its continuance. It should provide for it on the broad basis of the inalienable rights of humanity; of christian brotherhood; and of the obligations of the stewards of the manifold gifts of God that they be found faithful.

What, then, are the fair rights and claims of the first class, and what are the rights and duties of society in regard to them?

'The distinction,' says the report of the Commissioners on the pauper laws, 'is a broad one, and should never be lost sight of, between the idle beggar, and the impotent poor. For while the duty, in regard to the latter, is most plain, and enforced alike by the principles of religion and humanity, that they are to be supported by those who have the means and opportunity of supporting them, it is equally clear that the able-bodied and the idle have no claim to support from a tax upon the capacity, and the property of the industrious.' This is true. But it is neither all the truth, nor the most important truth upon this subject. For who, I again ask, are these idle and able-bodied, these intemperate and improvident claimants of alms? Some of them, indeed, were reared under advantages, from which a better condition and character might have been hoped for. But they had not moral strength to resist strong temptations to early vicious indulgence, surrounded as they were with facilities and excitements to this indulgence, which, even if they were not in all cases, in some at least were authorized by law; and in all were sanctioned by the approbation, or were either winked at, or unheeded by the policy, or the negligence, of society around them. A very great proportion, however, of these degraded fellow beings drew their first breath in the abodes of poverty; were reared amidst improvidence and intemperance; had few or no advantages during their childhood for religious, or any other useful instruction; and in the most susceptible season of life were exposed to all the influences which can corrupt the mind in all its springs of thought, and disposition, and conduct. When I see, as every week I see, the number of children who are growing up even in our City

of Schools, under the full action of all the circumstances which can vitiate the body, and deprave the soul; without any regular employment, and uncared for whether they are idle, or employed; very early as familiar with the language of profaneness, and as flippant in the use of it, as even a systematic education in it could have rendered them; already having acquired a love of ardent spirits, and being accustomed to obtain them when, and as they can; when I see these children, now wandering about with no other object than that of wearing away the time, and now engaged in petty gambling, or in some other and equally reckless indulgence; wholly uncontrolled at home, and only checked abroad, and kept from outrage, by their fear of its consequences; and when I think of the number of children similarly exposed in all our great towns, and in many of our small ones; when I am told of between ten and twelve thousand children in the city of New York, between the ages of five and fifteen years, and of two hundred and fifty thousand, between the same ages, in the State of Pennsylvania, who are not in any school; and when I think of the many hundreds of thousands in England, in Ireland, and on the continent of Europe, entering upon life, and passing its first fifteen or twenty years amidst moral dangers, of which no one speaks to them a warning word, and in the formation of habits as vicious and corrupting as they well can be; — truly I am surprised. But at what? Not that there is so much idleness, and intemperance, and improvidence, so much abjectness, and beggary, and vice among those who have physical strength for their own support. My surprise is, that there are not more, and more terrible outbreakings of the worst passions; that there is not more out-

rageous vice than we actually see among them. My surprise is, that so many of them are brought to do what they honestly may do for their own subsistence ; and, that they are not more frequently asking for what they need, or taking it unasked. Where, then, rests accountableness for their poverty, their character, their moral exposures, and the exposures of society through their lawless wants, and equally lawless dispositions and habits? A tremendous responsibility, in these respects, it seems to me lies upon the society around the poor of this class; for the causes of the degradation of these unhappy fellow beings are within the control of the society around them. The causes of this poverty are moral ; and three fourths of it may be prevented by the moral agencies, which it has pleased God to place within the power of those, who form and guide the opinions, and decree and establish the usages of society. Is it asked, what are these moral preventives? I will give my own views of them as briefly as I can.*

I would say, then, that the most important of all means for the rescue of those who are most exposed to fall into

* How can it be, that pauperism should not extend in our city, while 700 places are licensed in it for the sale of ardent spirits ; while a quart of these spirits may be obtained for ten cents, — a smaller sum than may be earned by the lowest laborer in an hour ; and while multitudes, under the excitement and gratification thus given to their vitiated appetites, are only more happy in the indulgence of these appetites, than they are in bringing others to the level of their own debasement? Let us be instructed by the facts which are daily calling for attention to this subject. The question of the causes and remedy of pauperism is intimately connected with the cause of liberty, order, virtue and happiness, through the generations that are to follow us. Let us be faithful to our interests and our duties in regard to it, and God will not fail to follow our efforts with his blessing.

this class of the poor, and for the security of society from the evils which are experienced, or are feared from them, is an active and prevalent sensibility in society to the true causes of their degradation ; an active and prevalent sentiment in society, of the nearness of the relation, and of the identity of the interests, of all its classes and its members ; and a corresponding feeling of obligation in every one, first, in no way to contribute to the production, or the maintenance of the causes of debasement and misery among his fellow creatures ; and, secondly, in every way, as he has the means and opportunity, to favor and support the measures, which, under such circumstances, he shall believe to be for the greatest good of the whole, and of every member of the community. Let this sensibility, this sentiment, and this feeling of obligation be what they should be, and what christianity intends that they shall be, in those who profess to receive it, and distilleries, and dramshops, and brothels, and gambling-houses, will not be found the formidable obstacles which they now are in the way of the reformation, and salvation of hundreds of thousands of our fellow beings from sin, and ruin, and wretchedness. I thank God that there is an increasing sensibility to the causes of the greatest, and of the most general suffering among us. But it is yet small compared with what it should be. And feeble, too, is the sentiment of the relation of men to each other, as the immortal children of the infinite Father ; and, consequently, of the identity of their immediate, through that of their eternal interests. Oh, when will this sentiment become the life-spring of the connexion and intercourse of man with man! We hear much of the mighty power of public opinion. And, in truth, it has done, and is doing much for the demolition of old, and

apparently impregnable institutions ; for the advancement of religious and civil freedom ; for the abolition of slavery ; for the suppression and prevention of intemperance ; and for other great concerns of humanity. More, indeed, in these respects, has been achieved within the last fifty years, and through this very agency, than was accomplished by the labors of the preceding fifteen centuries. But the power which christianity would give to it, and the uses which christianity would make of it, are, I think, yet very partially, and to a very limited extent, comprehended. Let it be brought under the guidance of the instructions of Jesus Christ, as far only as his religion is professedly received, and embued with the spirit which Christian principles would impart to it, and there are no objects to which an enlightened christian benevolence can prompt, which an enlightened christian opinion will not be able to accomplish. Let every one, then, who acknowledges the truth of christianity, be faithful to the obligations which it imposes on him. Something may be done, by means short of these, to check the progress of abject pauperism and crime. But by no other means can all the good which God has placed within our power be attained or accomplished.

But the difficulty will still recur, 'we must take the world as it is.' Be it so. The question then presents itself, suppose our poor-laws to be abolished, what immediate measures must be taken to meet the exigency ?

In the first place, I would reply, that *for the idle and able-bodied, the intemperate and improvident, who apply for alms, work, or the opportunity to work, should be provided.* I know it will be said, that however easy it

may be found to propose this plan, it will not be found very easy of execution. Perhaps not. But is it therefore wholly impracticable ? It would, indeed, be very difficult of execution, if an equal number with that of those who now make up this class of applicants for alms was continually, or even for a very long time, thus to be provided for. But suppose that our municipal authorities should advertise in all our newspapers, and even send the information from house to house, for a year, that half the average wages given to laborers who find for themselves sufficient employment, will be given by the city to the laborers who ask for alms because they cannot find employment, for each good day's work that shall be done by them in digging earth, and wheeling it on the city's lands, in the places which it is very desirable should be so improved, how much land would thus probably be brought into a state for the erection upon it of habitations for man ? I do not believe that many acres would thus be added to the city. But I do believe that, by this expedient, much might be done to check the spirit of beggary, and to excite many who are now willing to live by beggary to useful industry. For a short time, I have no doubt, in case of a repeal of our poor-laws, this class of the claimants of alms, in some of our towns, would be large ; and, for a long time, — at least as long as every conceivable excitement to intemperance is left in their way, — there will be a sufficient number of them to call for the very serious attention of the Overseers of the poor, and of the public. For this class of the poor I would not therefore wholly rely on this expedient. I would proceed a step further, and provide for them well organized *Work-houses*.

This measure is recommended in the Report of the

Commissioners. But it is there proposed only as a measure for 'the protection of the industrious and the thrifty, against the demands and incursions of the idle and able-bodied.' It is therefore there recommended only on the ground of the claims of society against this class of the poor. But it ought to have been distinctly stated, and should be distinctly understood, that the claim for these establishments is quite equal on the part of those who are to be sent to them. Work-houses, and even prisons, will assume a new character, and be regarded with new associations and sentiments by society, when it shall be fully comprehended to what an extent it is the *misfortune*, as well as the vice of the inmates of these institutions, by which they are brought to them. I have referred to the circumstances by which great numbers are brought into this class of the poor, and I will not here dwell upon them. I say only, that if society have a right to demand protection from them,—and I admit this right,—they, too, have some corresponding claims upon the sympathy of society. I do not say that they have a claim to alms, as such; for, in proportion as a reliance is had simply on alms for their relief, the very means of relief are also means of confirming and extending the evil. This reliance has indeed done very much to extend, and to perpetuate the evil. But it still may be a noble charity to found a Workhouse, which, while it gives support, and requires compensation for it from him who shall receive it, at the same time confers, with the support so given, the unspeakably greater good of that moral instruction and discipline, which shall call forth new and better dispositions than were ever before possessed, and do what can be done for the formation and establishment of a better charac-

ter. Let Work-houses be established on these principles in the counties, or in smaller districts or departments of our Commonwealth, in which alone Overseers of the poor shall be authorised to give aid to those who have physical power for self-support; and, let the Legislature give the power, if it be not already possessed, to compel the inmates of these institutions to so much labor as would at least have earned their entire support if they had been laboring abroad. To my mind, there would be nothing unjust, or unkind, in either of these measures; and should even very many, who might be so provided for, be unable to make a complete remuneration for the expenditures incurred for them, I cannot doubt that a great good would accrue both to the poor of this class, and to society, through these institutions. I cannot doubt that poverty, of the kind here referred to, to a considerable extent may thus be remedied; or that, to a still greater extent, its increase may thus be prevented.*

* The Work-house system, as it exists in England, is indeed as bad as could well be devised, and is as corruptly administered as the system of poor-rates. It is a fit part only of such a machinery as that to which it belongs, and could be retained only in such a connexion. When the Work-house system therefore is spoken of by English Political Economists, or Philanthropists, we are to understand that reference is had to Work-houses as they now exist in England. Two or three, or it may be half a dozen parishes unite to farm out their poor to the keeper of one of these establishments. The houses in which the poor are thus kept do not admit of the classification of their inmates, and a very depraving influence is constantly going on in them. Nay, in London at least, the inmates of these institutions are allowed to go out once and twice a week, to visit their friends; on which occasions they swell the number of street beggars, and are not distinguishable from them. — Nor have

The *second* class I have named consists of *the permanently poor, who are broken in constitution and health by the viciousness of their lives, and are capable of little or no service, by which they may minister to their own subsistence.* These, also, I would make the inmates of a *Work-house.* They are now, indeed, as they are seen abroad, and while living upon the miserable food which sustains them, and daily extending disease through their bodies, and corruption and misery through their minds, by the indulgence of their vitiated and lawless appetite for ardent spirits, often so much enfeebled, as to be able only to move about in search of sustenance, or of the stimulous which they feel to be more important for them than food. But in a well-regulated Work-house, to which they should be sent, or on their application received, as per-

we yet, in our own country, a Work-house as it should be. The best organized establishment of this kind which I have visited is that in Baltimore. There, a debt and credit account is opened with each inmate. Board, clothing and medical attendance, are charged to each; and as soon as any one is capable of work, work is required of him in payment of his debt. The principal employments in this establishment are, farming, weaving, shoe-making and tailoring. Seven cents a day are credited for work done: and he who leaves the institution without having received a regular discharge is held liable for the debt he has incurred in it; and if taken and returned, is punishable for a misdemeanor. — The average number per month in this institution last year was 434. The whole expense for the poor in it last year, was $13,956 45. The expense for out door poor, in the same year, was $1,814 25. Total, $15,770 70. The number of out door poor assisted by the Trustees for the poor was 117. — These sums are independent of expenditures for permanent improvements, and for interest upon the debt arising out of the purchase of the farm, which, if added to the above total, would make the whole expense to have been $17,004 67. The population of Baltimore is 80,000.

manent poor, to live and die there, many would regain the strength by which they could do something for their support; and, in truth, be a far less expense to society, than they are while living as they now live. The removal of the spectacle and example of such as these from the families in which they live, and the neighborhoods in which they are seen, would alone bring to these families and neighborhoods a moral good, which would richly repay the expense at which it must be purchased. This is a class of the poor which calls loudly for compassion. It contains some who have fallen from a condition of competency; and a greater number who have come into it from the first class which I have described of the poor, and who have descended, some more rapidly than others, and some further than others, into the gulf of utter darkness, and of total dependence, in which we find them. In a Work-house, organized upon the principles of an enlarged christian philanthropy, — by which I mean the principles at once of the greatest good to its inmates, and to society, — the poor of this class would recover some at least of the almost lost powers of their moral nature. Something, and perhaps much would be effected, in the work of their moral redemption. Without any encroachment upon their rights, government might give the power of continuing their confinement, in case of the recovery of their health, till they shall have made a suitable return, by their labors, for the care that has been taken of them. Government may thus at once act for the rich, in the protection of property; and for large numbers of the poor, in saving them from the greatest of their exposures and miseries.

That the two classes of the poor of which I have spoken comprehend a very large proportion of the depen-

dents upon public alms, we have the testimonies of the Superintendents of our Alms-houses. Of 499 inmates of our House of Industry, when it was visited by the agent of the Commissioners, three fourths, excluding idiots and the insane, were said to have been brought there by intemperance. Of 3,000 who have been admitted to the Salem Work-house, during the ten years in which it has been in the care of its present Superintendent, he thinks that 2,900 were brought there, directly or indirectly, by intemperance. Of 109 in the Marblehead Alms-house, 78 were brought there by the same cause. In Cambridge, three fourths of 104, and in Charlestown, the same proportion of 150, but for this cause, it is thought, would not have been in the Alms-house. And hardly is there a town in the Commonwealth, the statistics of whose poor have been taken, in which this is not considered as the principal cause of the most expensive poverty for which it has to make provision. Nor is this the strong conviction only of the Superintendents of our own Alms-houses. Say those of Columbia County, New York, 'Of all the persons sent to the Poor-house, more than half have been reduced to pauperism, directly or indirectly, by intemperance. The statute ought to provide directly, and not by implication, that the services of such persons shall be effectually under the control of those who have the support of their families, — the Overseers of the poor. The Poor-house system is daily becoming more popular, from satisfactory evidence of its bettering the condition of the poor, and vastly lessening the expense of their support.' — In this County, it is to be remembered, that aid is given by the Overseers only at the Poor-house. — The Superintendents in the County of Seneca 'do not

hesitate to say, that it is their firm belief that two thirds, if not three fourths of the pauperism of the County, arises from intemperance.' And, says the Superintendent of the Alms-house in the city of New York, in a letter dated 7th January, 1833, and addressed to the Secretary of State, 'The number of male adults at present in the house is 572, of which number there are not ten that can be called sober men. The number of female adults is 601, and I doubt whether there are fifty of them who can be called sober women. I consider the present pauper-laws as calculated to encourage intemperance, from the fact that habitual drunkards remain in the asylums which are provided for them *only during their pleasure. When they are ordered to work, many of them take their discharge. They soon become miserable objects about our streets, and are sent again to the Alms-house; and by the time they get well, again take their discharge. And so on from year to year. I believe that all persons whom the public support as habitual drunkards ought to be admitted to a Work-house for at least twelve months, where they could be compelled to earn their living. And when their term expires, if they take their discharge, and again become intemperate, commit them again for twelve months more, and so continue.*' I will only add, from the highly respectable Superintendent of our establishment for the poor at South Boston, that, 'when it was commenced, it was intended for the reception and employment of the able-bodied poor, who should claim the charity of the city. Hence it was called the *House of Industry. But it has no effectual means of detaining this class of the poor when they are disposed to escape from it. They go to it, therefore, only for temporary relief, when they are worn out by intemperance and disease, and leave*

it as soon as they have acquired strength to return to their former indulgencies in the city, or to lead a wandering life in travelling over the country. Instead, therefore, of being a House of Industry, the institution has become at once a general infirmary, an asylum for the insane, and a refuge for the deserted and destitute children of the city.' Here, then, is the chief cause of the worst form of poverty among us; of the poverty which calls for the largest expenditures, and which occasions the greatest public insecurity, and private misery. And here is suggested, or directly expressed, one of the practicable measures as well for its future prevention, as its immediate remedy. Let the principle be adopted, of long confinement in these institutions, and let it be faithfully carried through, and the necessity will be superseded of a large part of our annual provisions for alms. We have yet no model Work-house in our Commonwealth; no one which admits of the classification which should be made in such an establishment; no one, which, in its construction, is favorable to moral influences; no one suited as it should be for the most profitable employment of its inmates. Measures, however, are in train for obtaining plans of work-houses, which will comprehend all these objects. After all that can be done, these institutions cannot perhaps be made to support themselves. But if they shall greatly lessen the number, and improve the condition of the poor, as well as diminish the expenditures which may be required for the support of their inmates, will not society be compensated for the cost of them?

The *third* class I have named consists of *the virtuous poor, who, by reason of disease, or permanent debility, or old age, are to be permanently supported.* For these,

if too numerous to be supported by private charity, the most comfortable and humane, as well as the least expensive provision, is a well ordered *Alms-house* By an Alms-house, I here mean all which the term imports. It should be literally a *house of charity*, to which, however, none but the fair claimants of alms as a charity should be sent. I would admit to it none who have been brought to poverty by their own profligacy, intemperance, or recklessness of any kind. A distinction should be made, — it is demanded by the virtuous poor, and should be demanded by the sympathies of society with them, — between themselves, and those whose poverty is immediately ascribable to the grossest sins. I would, however, make an Alms-house, as far as it may be, a house of employment, for I would give to this class of the poor all possible facilities for self-support. Employment will even add much to the happiness of its inmates. But it should not be forgotten, that they have a right to support from alms, when they have been brought to poverty by causes beyond their control. I have been in some Alms-houses in our country towns, in which the inmates were even generally of the class of which I am now speaking ; and more comfortable establishments are hardly to be desired for them. Nor is the fact, of which abundant evidence is furnished by the Report of the Commissioners, unworthy of notice, that where Alms-houses have been established upon farms for the employment of the poor, the expense of towns for them has been lessened one half, or two thirds, even where there was so small an ability to labor in their inmates, that it would have seemed a circumstance to be cast out of the account in looking to the probable results of these institutions as an experiment.

The *fourth* class, that is, the class of those who are *temporarily and occasionally poor, who are doing what they can for self-support, but who need, and especially in the winter, and during a time of sickness, occasional and temporary aid, I would leave for the exercises of private charity.* There are some also of the immediately preceding class, whose characters and conditions will call forth that sympathy and interest, which will secure for them an adequate, an entirely comfortable support, in the homes which private charity will provide for them. So great, indeed, is the proportion of the idle, intemperate, and reckless dependents upon alms, that, if efficient measures should be taken for the care of these, I know not the claim of charity which our community would not most promptly and willingly answer. Many at least are our towns, in which there would not then be left a greater number requiring 'charitable alms,' than would be required to keep our sympathies with the poor in a happy and healthful exercise.

I have made a class also of the *orphan, the deserted, the neglected, and otherwise morally exposed children of the poor.* These, in large towns, form even a very large class of the fairest claimants of public sympathy and charity. Nothing can be more injudicious than it is to send children of this class to establishments, in which they are brought into a close connexion with adults, who have been brought to poverty by gross vices. Many of these children are innocent, and in our disposal of them, should be recognised as innocent Many of them, however, require a very efficient moral discipline, which is hardly to be looked for but in an institution expressly established for their object. Such an institution is our House of Reformation. Such an

institution will be our Farm School. A due regard to the condition and claims of this class of children would be one of the most effectual of all means of preventing both poverty and crime.

I will only add, that I look for no great general good, in any of the departments of society, except from moral causes ; and I look for the operation of moral causes only to an enlightened, and a free public sentiment. Much may be done for the poor, by a ministry which shall be exclusively devoted to their improvement and happiness. But this ministry will not be effectual to the good which might be accomplished by it, till it shall have the full aid and support of public sentiment. In proportion as the classes of society shall be aroused to a distinct perception, and a just estimate of moral interests, as incomparably the greatest of all interests, the means will be multiplied, in all classes, of the amelioration of human suffering, and of the greatest advancement of human happiness. It is not surprising that so many of the causes of pauperism, and of crime and wretchedness, have continued, and still continue to act almost unchecked, when it is considered how very little thought is given to these causes ; how entirely attention, in most men, is absorbed by personal and selfish interests ; how vague, even in many who would rise above these interests, is the sentiment of their relation either to God, or to their fellow beings ; and, consequently, how feeble is the sentiment, that the life-spring of the purest happiness in every individual soul is that spirit of sympathy, and fraternity, which finds its own best good in the communication of good and happiness to them. I should even welcome any embarrassments, any immediate pressure, even of suffering, which would call forth a pre-

vailing christian sentiment in man towards his fellow man ; a deep conviction and feeling of the truth, that the proper object of the highest concern of every individual, is his own moral good, and that of his fellow beings. By nothing short of this, I repeat, are the objects of christianity in our world attainable, as far as their attainment is connected with human agency. I should rejoice, therefore, in the repeal of all legal enactments for the support of the poor, if from no other cause, for the very reason that it would do something, and would, probably do much, to bring the question before the public at once as an individual, and a general concern, what is duty, and what is interest, in respect to the several classes of the poor ? The sooner this question is so to be met, the better it will be both for society, and for the poor. Both duty and interest have, I think, been alike mistaken upon this great question ; and the opposition and conflicts which have been supposed to exist between these principles, were but the oppositions and conflicts of interests directly opposed to christian duty. Let christian precepts be made our rule, and christian purposes our end, and there will be no clashing between them. Then will the rich be honored by the poor; and in turn, they will '*honor the poor*.' 'This sentiment of respect,' — I quote the words of one whom it is my happiness to call my friend, — 'is essential to an improving connexion between the more and less prospered conditions of society. This alone makes beneficence truly Godlike. Without it, alms-giving degrades the receiver. We must learn how slight and shadowy are the distinctions between us and the poor ; and that the last in outward distinctions may be the first in the best attributes of humanity. A fraternal union, founded

on this deep conviction, and intended to lift up the exposed and tempted poor, is to do infinitely more for that suffering class, than all our artificial associations; and, till Christianity shall have breathed into us this spirit of respect for our nature, wherever it is found, we shall do them little good. I conceive that in the present low state of christian virtue, we little apprehend the power which might be exerted over the fallen and destitute, by a benevolence which should truly, thoroughly recognise in them the image of God. Perhaps none of us have yet heard, or can comprehend the tone of voice, in which a man, thoroughly impressed with this sentiment, would speak to a fellow creature. It is a language hardly known on earth; and no eloquence, I believe, has achieved such wonders as it is destined to accomplish.'*

Respectfully,

JOSEPH TUCKERMAN.

Boston, May 5th, 1833.

P. S. I have not been taken from my service by any severe sickness during the last six months; and each month has brought to me increased evidence of the importance of this ministry. The connexions which are formed in it are favorable to the daily exertion of a very important moral influence, in cases which are hardly to be reached by any other institution; and I am more and more persuaded, if suitable instruments for the work can be obtained, that by no means can the well being of cities be more effectually advanced, than through the operations of this ministry. I am very happy in being able to inform you, that our friends in New York have invited Mr Arnold to take the office of a minister at large there; and I believe that he will at once enter upon

* Channing's Discourses, p. 165.

its duties. May our heavenly Father crown his service with the choicest blessings! Within the past six months, I have received very efficient aid from my coadjutor and friend, Mr C. F. Barnard. He has taken the entire charge of the services of the Chapel, and has devoted himself to his work with unremitted fidelity. The next report to you of this ministry will probably be made by him.

J. T.